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ABSTRACT

Aspects of the social environment that contribute to the development of a child's self-esteem are the topic of this literature review. Three issues are addressed. Taken up first are the often conflicting theories concerning how self-esteem is developed and maintained. Second is the issue of the influence on self-esteem of significant others. Third is the influence that family variables have on self-esteem. Self-esteem is found to be more a function of the perceived reflected appraisals of significant others than of modeling parent's self-esteem. Both parents and peers were found to have a significant influence over a child's self-esteem according to most researchers, while it was also found by a few researchers that parents and peers played important, but different, functions for the child. Since families played a role as significant others in the development of a child's self-esteem, the effect of family structure variables and family process variables on self-esteem was examined. The structure variable of divorced families versus intact families had conflicting results. Family process variables of parental support, parental control, and parental punishment were found to influence the child's self-esteem. The complex issues surrounding the development and maintenance of a child's self-esteem indicate a need for more research in this area, and researchers are challenged to refine their theoretical explanations in order to fill in neglected details and to take into account overlooked complexities regarding self-esteem. (ABL)

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THE IMPACT OF OTHERS ON A CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

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by

Marisa M. Shelton

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THE IMPACT OF OTHERS

ON A CHILD'S SELF-ESTEEM

He began his life with all of the classic disadvantages. His mother was a domineering woman who found it difficult to love anyone. She had been married three times. Her second husband divorced her because of the regular beatings she gave him. Her third husband died of a heart attack a few months before the boy's birth. Consequently, the mother had to work long hours from his earliest childhood.

He received no affection, no love, no discipline, and no training from his mother during those early years. Since other children had little to do with him, he was alone and rejected most of the time. When he was thirteen years old, a school counselor commented that he probably didn't even know the meaning of the word "love." Thus he fought with the boys, and the girls would have nothing to do with him (Dobson, 1971).

Inspite of a high IQ, he failed academically and consequently dropped out of high school during his junior year. He enlisted in the Marine Corps hoping for a new start, but his problems went with him. The other marines laughed at him and ridiculed him rather than accepting him. When he fought back and resisted authority, he was court-martialed and dismissed from the marines with an undesirable discharge. So there he was, a young man in his early twenties--without friends and without a sense of worthiness.

He thought he could run from his problems, so he went to live in a foreign country. While there, he married a girl who had been an illegitimate child, and he brought her back to America with him. Soon, she began to display contempt for him, also. Instead of being his ally against the cruel world, she became one of his most vicious opponents. She not only fought with him, but she also learned to bully him. Finally, as their marriage continued to crumble, she forced him to leave.

He was terribly lonely as he tried to make it on his own. After days of solitude, he surrendered all pride and literally begged her to take him back. But she laughed at him, she ridiculed his attempts to supply the family's needs, and she criticized his failure.

After weeping bitterly, he finally pleaded no more. No one accepted him, perhaps no one had ever accepted him. He was possibly the most rejected man of our time. His ego lay shattered in tiny fragmented pieces (Dobson, 1971).

The next day, he arose, went to the garage, and took down a rifle he had hidden there. He took it with him to his new job at a book-storage building. From a window on the third floor of that building, shortly after noon, November 22, 1963, he shot two shells into the head of President John F. Kennedy.

Lee Harvey Oswald, the rejected failure, killed the man who, more than any other man on earth at that time, embodied

all of the success, acceptance, prestige, wealth, and family support which he lacked (Dobson, 1971). An understanding of Lee Harvey Oswald's inner torment and feelings of rejection helps to see him not only as a vicious assassin, but also as the tragic, rejected man that he was.

A greater tragedy, though, is that Lee Harvey Oswald's plight is not uncommon in today's society. While others may have responded less violently, the same engrossing awareness of rejection and feelings of inferiority are seen in every facet of today's complex world--in every school, in every neighborhood, and in every community.

In addition to every community being involved, all ages are involved in this malady. No age group is exempt from this personal devaluation. Every age possesses its own unique threats to self-esteem. For example, some adolescents are bitterly disappointed with who they are and what they represent. Little children also suffer a severe loss of status during the impressionable years of childhood in certain instances. Additionally, most adults are still attempting to cope with the inferiority experienced in earlier times.

Since lack of self-esteem is universally prevalent at all ages of life in all areas of today's society, one needs to ask "why?" Why don't individuals grow up with a high self-esteem? Why do so many feel rejected and unloved? The answers to these questions are of major significance to a

society that is concerned about the health of its individual members. When self-esteem is unattainable to members in the society, the society as a whole suffers (Dobson, 1971).

Agreeing with the viewpoint that self-esteem of individuals was imperative to a healthy society, the legislature in the state of California in September of 1986 passed a law that established a Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem. The task force desired to determine whether self-esteem and personal and social responsibility were the keys to unlocking the secrets of healthy human development so that they could get to the roots of and develop solutions for major social problems. The task force also wanted to develop and provide for every Californian the latest knowledge and practices regarding the significance of self-esteem ("California Esteemin'," 1987).

California Governor George Deukmejian signed the bill into law that gave the task force a three year budget of $735,000. He was quoted in the Los Angeles Times as saying that a task force such as this would pay for itself many times over if it could make Californians feel good about themselves, since everyone knew that the social costs of low self-esteem were incalculable (cited in Seligman, 1987). Reiterating this belief, Section 1 of the California State Assembly Bill 3691 stated that most individual behavior was motivated by self-perception and self-image. Increased self-esteem tended to make people become more

achievement-oriented, confident, creative, productive, and successful, which in turn translated into a society which was healthier, safer, more productive, and less costly.

On the other hand, low self-esteem had a wide-ranging negative influence on individual conduct, the costs of which in both human and societal terms were manifested in numerous ways. For example, low self-esteem was reflected in increased aggressiveness and violent behavior, low academic achievement levels, discrimination, increased rate of teenage pregnancies, authoritarian economic and political organizations, increased drug and alcohol abuse, feelings of powerlessness, emotional repression, poor physical health, and lethargy (cited in "California's Feel-Good," 1984). Thus, because the issue of self-esteem was an extremely important one concerning the welfare of society, research that had been conducted with regard to self-esteem needed to be examined. This paper focused on research that dealt with a child's self-esteem.

A child's self-esteem refers to evaluations that a child makes about himself. Aspects of the social environment that might contribute to the development of self-esteem have been the focus of considerable research. The family is generally considered an important influence for the development of a child's self-concept. Peer appraisal and its effect on the child's self-esteem is another important focus of research. Family and peer

relationships, reflected through behavioral interactions, are a focus of the research that is generally considered important for the development of a child's self-esteem. Consequently, this paper addressed three issues. How is self-esteem defined theoretically? What is the influence of significant others on self-esteem? How do family variables effect the self-esteem of children?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Even though the concept of self-esteem had already found an eminent place in social psychology, a recent resurgence of interest in the self has flourished. This interest reflected a recognition that high levels of self-esteem were empirically associated with other valued characteristics, and low levels of self-esteem were empirically associated with undesirable characteristics (Coopersmith, 1967). Consequently, three issues concerning self-esteem were addressed in this paper. First of all, self-esteem was defined according to popular and often competing theoretical explanations regarding the self-concept. These theories explained the ways in which self-esteem was developed and maintained. Secondly, the paper addressed the issue of the influence that significant others had on self-esteem. The influences of particular significant others were described, compared, and analyzed. The final issue the paper addressed was the influence that family variables had on self-esteem. Both family structure variables and family process variables were analyzed in terms of improving or diminishing self-esteem.

Theoretical Explanations Of Self-Esteem

Competing theoretical explanations emphasized differing processes to account for the development and maintenance of self-esteem. Social learning theory and symbolic interaction theory provided the basis for the explanations

discussed in this paper. Social learning theory emphasized vicarious or observational learning and suggested that a child's self-esteem was positively related to the parent's self-esteem (Openshaw, Thomas, & Rollins, 1984). In contrast, symbolic interaction theory emphasized reflected appraisals and suggested that a child's sense of worth was derived from social reflections or feedback of others, especially significant others (Gecas, Calonico, & Thomas, 1974). This reflected appraisal theory was supported by additional research suggesting that perceived appraisals of others rather than actual appraisals of others were more important in the formation of the self-concept (Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966; Schafer & Keith, 1985).

Some researchers have broadened the theoretical approach of the importance of reflected appraisals also to include active self-appraisals in the development of one's self-concept (Franks & Morolla, 1976). This dual approach to self-esteem emphasized the belief that not only were one's self-evaluations affected by the appraisals of others, but also one's self-evaluation was based on the appraisal of efficacious action of the individual (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). Thus the model theory that suggested a child's self-esteem was positively related to the parent's self-esteem versus the mirror theory that suggested a child's self-esteem was derived from feedback from others emphasized differing processes in the development and maintenance of self-esteem.

Social learning theory and reflected appraisal theory. Previous researchers had suggested that both modeling, or social learning theory, and mirroring, or reflected appraisal theory, were viable explanations for the development and maintenance of self-esteem (Gecas et al., 1974; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983; Openshaw et al., 1984). For example, Gecas et al. (1974) compared the relative influence of parental modeling and mirroring on the child's self-concept and the contingencies under which one or the other process was more important. These researchers found the relationships between parent's evaluations of child and the child's self-evaluations were stronger than those between parent's self-evaluations and the child's self-evaluations. Also, Openshaw et al. (1984) found that the relationship between the parent's evaluations of the adolescent as reflected in the course of parent-adolescent interaction and the adolescent's self-evaluation was stronger than the parent's self-evaluation and the adolescent's self-evaluation. Thus, self-esteem was more a function of social interaction and the reflected appraisals of significant others than of modeling parent's self-esteem.

Social learning theory still added to the explanation of self-esteem, though. Social learning variables such as parental self-esteem and parental power were related significantly to adolescent self-esteem in ten out of sixteen dyad--dimension comparisons of self-esteem in the

study of Openshaw et al. (1984). However, in only three out of sixteen were the social learning variables found to have greater relative effect when compared to symbolic interaction variables such as parental support, induction, and coercion (Openshaw et al., 1984).

Additionally, both mirror and model correlations were consistently higher for girls than boys (Gecas et al., 1974) supporting the hypothesis that females were more dependent on and susceptible to parental influence than were males. Gecas et al. (1974) also concluded that fathers appeared to be the more influential model for both girls and boys. The average correlations on modeling were .14 for father and .07 for mother. He hypothesized that power may be more relevant than gender for the modeling process since in most American families the father was perceived to have the most power.

When the age of the child was considered, Gecas et al. (1974) found that younger children tended to model their parents more than older children. That was consistent with the rather common observation that children began to identify less with parents as they got older and their scope of relations expanded.

Gecas et al. (1974) did not find the same tendency for the mirroring influence of parents, though. Correlations indicated that parental influence was stronger for older children. Thus the explanations for the development and maintenance of self-esteem varied with regard to both the

social learning theory and the reflected appraisal theory.

The reflected appraisal theory of self-esteem supported the interactionist notion that a person's self-esteem was a function of others' reflected appraisal of the person's inherent worth (Coopersmith, 1967; Gecas et al., 1974; Openshaw et al., 1984). Schafer and Keith's (1985) findings added to this theory by emphasizing that one's own perception of how one appeared to others was the process whereby the self-concept became defined. Their subjects were 333 married couples randomly selected and interviewed. Measures of the reflected self were marriage partner's self-concept, partner's perception of spouse's evaluation, and spouse's actual evaluation. The findings indicated that actual evaluations by spouses did not have a direct effect on subjects' self-concepts, but rather an indirect effect mediated via the subjects' perceptions of their spouses' evaluations of them.

Additional researchers also found that the perceived rather than the actual appraisal of others was more important in the formation of the self-concept (Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams, 1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Quarantelli & Cooper, 1966). Not only has the reflected appraisal been broadened to include perceived versus actual appraisals, but it has also been broadened to include self-appraisals.

Self-appraisal theory. Because some researchers believed sociology's emphasis upon reflected appraisals'

major process in the development of self-concepts gave a limited, passive, and over socialized view of self-concept formation (Felson, 1981a, 1981b; Felson, 1985; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983), self-appraisal theory emerged to broaden the symbolic interactionist view of reflected appraisals. According to the self-appraisal theory, individuals made judgments about themselves based on observations of their own behavior and internal states, and the context in which these occurred. Self-appraisal required, however, that persons had standards or criteria for interpreting what they observed, and these criteria may, for the most part, have been acquired from others (Felson, 1981b).

There was evidence that both self-appraisal and other's appraisals played a role in the development of self-esteem (Felson, 1981a, 1981b; Franks & Marolla, 1976), and a dual approach to self-esteem was supported (Franks & Marolla, 1976). The dual model of self-esteem took into consideration the reciprocal influence of human beings, yet it also left room for separability and autonomy. It avoided a simplistic view of self-esteem and provided an answer to how men who have betrayed their own values may suffer critical loss of self-esteem even though their peers as well as the public gave consistently positive feedback for appraisals (Franks & Marolla, 1976). Thus the dual approach to self-esteem broadened the reflected appraisal approach to include the importance of appraising one's own efficacious

actions as well as receiving appraisals from others in developing one's self-esteem.

Influence Of Significant Others On Self-Esteem

Since the reflected appraisal approach to self-esteem emphasized that appraisals of others was important in the formation of the self-concept, the next logical step was to examine which others influenced self-esteem. Not all others were equally significant to an individual, and those who were more significant had a greater influence on the development of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1973). Consequently, the current debate about the relative influence of parents and peers on self-esteem was an attempt to understand the mechanisms by which both parents and peers influenced the development of self-esteem. Aside from the issue of the relative influence of parents and peers on self-esteem, gender appeared to play a major role in determining which others were "most significant" with respect to self-evaluation. This paper investigated the proposition that males and females differed in the ways in which parents and peers related to self-esteem.

Parental and peer influence. The ways in which parents and peers influenced an individual's self-esteem was a complicated issue debated among several researchers. For example, Hoelter (1986) did a study with 416 sixth grade children and found that the identity evaluations of "athlete," "son/daughter," and "student" had positive

effects on self-esteem, while the effects of "friend" and "club member" evaluations on self-esteem were small and non-significant. In contrast, de Vaus (1983) found evidence that mother and close friends were more important than father and crowd in influencing adolescent self-concept. Gecas (1972) found that adolescents seemed to feel more authentic with their peers.

Self-esteem was influenced by both parents and friends according to many researchers (Di Cindio, Floyd, Wilcox, & McSeveney, 1983; Hollander & Marcia, 1970; O'Donnell, 1976; Pipp & Robinson, 1985; Tesser, 1980). For instance, O'Donnell (1976) conducted a study to see if there was a developmental process whereby the self-esteem of young adolescents was more closely related toward parents and that of older adolescents more closely related to feelings toward best friends. The subjects, 138 eighth graders and 139 eleventh graders, completed the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale and the Inventory of Family Feelings with regard to parents and best male and female friends. Self-esteem was found to be generally related to feelings toward parents and toward friends for adolescents of both grades. Feelings toward parents were generally more closely related to self-esteem than feelings toward friends, although the relationship between self-esteem and feelings towards parents decreased with the older group. Thus, O'Donnell (1976) concluded that if a developmental shift in the relationship between

self-esteem and feelings toward friends occurred, it did so slowly, showing only a slight beginning by the 11th grade.

Pipp and Robinson (1985) also found that parents and peers played important--but different--functions for adolescents. Older adolescents strongly identified with both parents and peers, but the form of the identification was different depending on the relationship. Older adolescents in this study felt that they shared more traits with their friends than with their parents, yet greater similarity between self and projected parental esteem was obtained. Older adolescents perceived high correspondency between their own esteem and those they projected to their parents, as evidenced by the strikingly high correlations between self-esteem and the projected esteem measures for mother (r = .89) and father (r = .76). In contrast, self-esteem was independent from the projected esteem of best friend (r = -.06) (Pipp & Robinson, 1985). Thus it may be that older adolescents were not yet emotionally separated from their parents, while close friends, however, were more distinct and separate from the self. While parents and peers both influenced adolescents in the studies of O'Donnell (1976) and Pipp and Robinson (1985), gender also appeared to play a major role in determining how parents and peers influenced self-esteem.

Sex differences regarding significant others. Sex interacted with the perceived appraisals of individuals in

affecting self-concept (Eskilson and Wiley, 1987; Hoelter, 1984). For instance, Eskilson and Wiley (1987) investigated the proposition that adolescent boys and girls differed in self-esteem and in the ways in which variables such as parental approval and peer acceptance were related to self-esteem. Their sample of 316 high SES junior and senior high students provided sex-differentiated results. Girls became increasingly "people-oriented" with age. They maintained their dependence on family cues for formulating their self-concepts, and they additionally became more dependent on friends' approval. In contrast, the family approval and support boys believed they received no longer was an important element in determining the level of self-esteem by the time they were juniors and seniors in high school. Friends' acceptance, however, continued to influence the boys' self-concept. Thus the boys in this study appeared to be well on their way to emancipating themselves from family ties at least as far as self-esteem was concerned.

In comparison to Eskilson and Wiley (1987), Hoelter (1984) also found that sex interacted with self-esteem. He concluded that perceived appraisals of friends had the largest impact on self-evaluations among females, while the perceived appraisals of parents had the largest effect on self-evaluation among males. This study, conducted on a sample of 136 Louisville high school seniors, examined the

relative effects of perceived appraisals of teachers, friends, and parents on self-evaluation. The researcher also found that perceived appraisals had greater effects on self-evaluation for males than for females. Thus aside from providing support for the general assertion that others were not equally significant in their impact on self-conception, Hoelter (1984) and Eskilson and Wiley (1987) suggested that one's sex appeared to play a major role in determining which others were "most significant" with respect to self-evaluation.

Effect Of Family Variables On Self-Esteem

Since families do play a role as significant others in self-esteem development and maintenance, the effect family variables had on self-esteem was the final issue addressed in the paper. Several family variables have been examined in relation to self-esteem, so family variables were logically divided into family structure variables and family process variables. Family structure variables included intact families, divorced families and family conflict. Family process variables included parental support, parental control, and parental punishment behaviors. Sex differences with regard to these variables were also explored. Thus the goal was to specify and analyze the relationships between several family variables and the self-concept of children.

Divorce. Results of the research varied with regard to the family structure variable of divorce. For example,

divorce was reported to have a negative effect on self-esteem in Parish and Dostal's 1980 study and in Parish and Wigle's 1985 study. Parish and Wigle (1985) carried out a 3-year longitudinal study of 639 students from 14 Kansas school districts to assess the attitudes of children toward themselves and their parents and to see if they changed in the wake of parental divorce or other potentially traumatic events. The children were divided into an intact-intact group, a divorced-divorced group, or an intact-divorced group. The intact-intact group consisted of subjects from families that were intact and remained continuously intact over the three-year longitudinal study. While the divorced-divorced group consisted of subjects who had experienced father absence prior to the study and whose remaining parent had not remarried, the intact-divorced group consisted of subjects from families that were intact at the beginning of the study but had experienced father absence due to divorce before the 3-year study was completed.

The results of Parish and Wigle's 1985 study found that children who were living in intact families were found to consistently evaluate themselves and their parents more positively than did children who had experienced parental divorce. Thus father absence subsequent to divorce was strongly associated with relatively negative evaluations of self and parents on the part of children.

From the pattern of changes that was observed over time in the dependent variable scores of the groups in the study, the researchers determined that divorce was a process and not just a single event. Specifically, the first year following father absence subsequent to divorce was associated with the most negative child outcomes. This was indicated by the fact that the posttest evaluations of the intact-divorced group were the most negative posttest evaluations of all the groups in the study. However, the evaluations of the subjects who experienced parental divorce tended to moderate with the passage of time although they did not become as positive as the evaluations of subjects who did not experience parental divorce at all. Thus the impact of divorce and subsequent father absence may have left feelings within the children of bitterness toward the absent father and greater reliance on the remaining mother (Parish & Dostal, 1980).

Even though Parish and Wigle (1985) and Parish and Dostal (1980) reported that divorce had a negative effect on children's self-esteem, other researchers have found no association between the family structure variable of divorce and a child's self-esteem (Hammond, 1979; Holman & Woodroffe-Patrick, 1988; Raschke & Raschke, 1979). For example, Hammond (1979) conducted a study with 165 elementary school children. Data was collected from 82 children from intact families. The Piers-Harris Children's

Self-Concept Scale and the Attitude Toward Family Questionnaire was given to all the children, while the Hammond Children of Divorce Questionnaire was also given to the children whose parents were separated or divorced. Analysis of the data indicated that there were no significant differences in the self-concepts between children of intact and divorced families.

Similarly, in Raschke and Raschke's 1979 study of 289 third, sixth, and eighth grade students, the researchers found that family structure made no significant difference in children's self-concepts. Raschke and Raschke (1979) used the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale in studying intact, single-parent, and reconstituted families. Their findings did not lend any support to the cliche that "broken homes yield broken young lives" (Raschke & Raschke, 1979). While the results of research varied with regard to divorce, another family structure variable was investigated in research to further complicate the findings.

Family conflict. The variable of family conflict with regard to self-esteem was investigated in numerous studies (Amato, 1986; Cooper, Holman, & Braithwaite, 1983; Parish, Dostal, & Parish, 1981; Raschke & Raschke, 1979). In all of the studies, children who perceived greater conflict in their families had significantly lower self-concepts. For example, in the 1979 study, Raschke and Raschke asked 289 children whether or not there was fighting in their

families, whether or not the grownups fought, and how happy they thought their parents were. The children who perceived greater conflict had lower self-esteem just as the children did in the 1983 study of Cooper et al.

These researchers defined family interaction in terms of children's perceptions of the closeness of parents and siblings. They divided family types and their expected relationships with children's self-esteem into five categories. The first type was two-parent cohesive families, where children perceived close ties between themselves, both parents and their siblings. One parent cohesive families, where children saw their single-parent family unit as close, was the second category. Thirdly, the isolated children perceived themselves as isolates within the family. The divided family, where children perceived division between their parents and could attach themselves to either mother or father, was the fourth category. The final family type was the parent-coalition family. In this type of family, the children perceived some family divisions, with one cohesive group formed by the parents and another by the children.

The results of the research indicated that children from different family types experienced differences in self-esteem. Children in two-parent cohesive families had the highest self-esteem. The self-esteem of children progressively decreased in one-parent cohesive families,

parent coalition families, divided families, and families in which the children felt isolated. This illustrated that self-esteem decreased with diminishing family support and with increasing family conflict. Additionally, Amato (1986) found a strong negative association between marital conflict and self-esteem among primary school girls even though he did not find an association of the two among primary school boys. Thus while researchers investigated the relationship between the family structure variables of intact families, divorced families, and family conflict on child self-esteem, family process variables were also being studied.

Parental support. While the impact of both family structure variables and family process variables on self-esteem had been studied by numerous researchers, Amato and Ochiltree (1986) found that self-esteem was more strongly related to family process variables than to family structure variables. Thus the process variables of parental support, parental control, and parental punishment behavior on child self-esteem was reviewed in this paper. Amato and Ochiltree's 1986 study of third and fourth grade children and adolescents revealed that parental support such as parental helping, talking, and parental time with the child related positively to self-esteem for both ages.

Other researchers found similar results regarding a positive correlation between parental support and increased self-esteem in children (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Englander,

1984; Gecas 1972; Halpin, Halpin, & Whiddon, 1980; Hoelter & Harper, 1987; Peterson, Southworth, & Peters, 1983). For example, Englander (1984) compared the responses of 52 runaway females with 51 nonrunaway females on measures of family interaction and self-esteem. Nonrunaway girls described their parents as warm and supportive to a significantly greater extent than did their runaway peers, and runaways scored lower in self-esteem. Similarly, in a study of 2,194 fifth and sixth grade children from Appalachia, parental support demonstrated by maternal loving behavior exhibited a positive relationship with children's self-esteem (Peterson et al., 1983). The maternal loving dimension of the Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaire used in the study was composed of 15 items that identified parental supportive behavior as such things as nurturance, affective reward, and companionship.

In comparison, Halpin et al. (1980) indicated through their research that parental support variables such as comfort and help in time of need, praise, reward for good grades in school, parental pleasure, and instructive help all contributed to positive self-esteem in their study of American Indian and white children ranging in age from 12 to 18 years. Consequently, these researchers agree that the family process variable of parental support plays an important role in the development and maintenance of a positive self-esteem in children.

Parental control. Another process variable that was investigated with regard to child self-esteem was parental control (Amorosa & Ware, 1986; Englander, 1984; Leahy, 1981; Nunn & Parish, 1980). Nunn and Parish (1980) found significantly more positive evaluations of self were associated with controlling or restrictive parenting practices than with permissive parenting practices in their study of 55 undergraduate college students attending a large midwestern university. As a measure of self and parental evaluations, each student filled out three copies of the Personal Attribute Inventory describing "yourself," "mother," or "father." The students were also asked to rank how their father and mother raised them on a restrictive versus permissive scale and a warmth versus hostility scale. The study showed that students who perceived their fathers as restrictive, or controlling, as opposed to permissive in their parenting practices were significantly more positive in their evaluations of themselves. The post hoc analysis showed that students from homes with restrictive fathers were significantly more positive in their self-concepts than students from homes with moderate fathers or permissive fathers. Thus, perceived restrictiveness of the father's attitudes and behavior was generally associated with increased favorableness in self-ratings.

This interpretation was supported to some degree by Coopersmith's (1967) suggestion that children who are reared

in a permissive home environment tend to develop less self-esteem than those reared in a controlling or demanding atmosphere. Englander (1984) and Leahy (1981) also found that parental control enhanced the child's sense of perceived worth. In Leahy's 1981 study, a more positive self-image for 10th-grade girls was related to the father's emphasis on control and supervision and the mother's emphasis on control of sex and aggression. Father's control and supervision factors included items such as "I do not allow my child to get angry with me, I expect my child to be grateful and appreciate all the advantages he/she has, I believe it is unwise to let children play a lot by themselves without supervision from adults." Mother's control of sex and aggression factors included items such as "I think a child should be encouraged to do things better than others; I believe that children should not have secrets from their parents; and I do not allow my child to question my decisions."

Even though Leahy (1981), Englander (1984) and Nunn and Parish (1980) found a relationship between higher self-esteem and the family process variable of parental control, Amorosa and Ware (1986) found a relationship between lower self-esteem and parental control. In their study of 480 adolescent students, they found that the degree of perceived parental control such as the degree to which their mother and father attempted to control their

life, and whether or not they always had to report where they were going, was negatively related to self-evaluation, although only marginally so. Amorosa and Ware (1986) also found a marginally negative relationship between self-esteem and parental punishment, another family process variable.

Parental punishment. The family process variable of parental punishment has been related to a low self-esteem in several research studies of children (Amorosa & Ware, 1986; Halpin et al., 1980; Peterson et al., 1983). Parental punishment did not seem conducive to high self-esteem in the study of Indian and white adolescents by Halpin et al. (1980). Spanking, scolding, and not being allowed to engage in desirable activities seemed to result in a belief that the environment was controlled by others instead of oneself. The researchers concluded that unfriendly and disappointed parental reactions along with encouragement of shame and guilt for undesirable behavior seemed to be related to low self-esteem.

These findings were similar in results to those of Peterson et al. (1983). These researchers examined the relationships between children's perceptions of maternal child-rearing behavior of punishment and a measure of children's self-esteem. The Lipsitt Self-Concept Scale was used on the 2,194 fifth and sixth grade rural Appalachia children. Maternal punishment was negatively correlated with children's self-esteem, and Peterson et al. (1983)

concluded that punishment possibly communicated maternal rejection because the children failed to meet maternal expectations. Thus punitive behavior appeared to have adverse consequences for the self-esteem of the children from these lower socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently the family process variable of parental punishment was negatively correlated with the child's self-esteem in all three studies (Amorosa & Ware, 1986; Leahy, 1981; Nunn & Parish, 1980).

Sex differences regarding family process variables. While research findings were the same for the variable of parental punishment, differences were found between males and females with regard to self-esteem and family process variables (Barber & Thomas, 1986; Demo et al., 1987; Elrod & Crase, 1980; Gecas, 1971; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; Growe, 1980). Whether fathers and mothers behave differently or the same toward male and female children was disputed in the literature. Growe (1980) found a general similarity of parental behavior reported by boys and girls and concluded that parents treated children of both sexes similarly.

In contrast, Elrod and Crase (1980) concluded that fathers and mothers behave differently toward their male and female children. They found that fathers interacted more with sons than with daughters, that mothers interacted similarly with sons and daughters, and that mothers interacted more with sons and daughters than did fathers.

They also reported that certain behaviors of mothers were related to high self-esteem in girls while similar or even the same behaviors of fathers were related to low self-esteem in boys and girls. For example, a mother's active involvement with a daughter, immediate assistance to a daughter, and imposing limits on a daughter was correlated with the daughter's positive self-esteem. In contrast, however, the behaviors of fathers which related to low self-esteem of sons also involved limit-setting or immediacy of assistance. Thus, in several cases behavior of mothers toward daughters correlated significantly with high self-esteem while that same behavior by fathers toward sons related to low self-esteem.

Barber and Thomas (1986) also found differentiated results regarding gender and child self-esteem. In their analysis of 527 college students, they investigated 4 separate dimensions of parental support: general support, physical affection, companionship, and sustained contact. General support factors were items such as "was there if I needed him/her," physical affection included items such as "hugged or kissed me goodnight," companionship included items such as "spent time with me and talked with me, " and sustained contact included items such as "picked me up for safety or fun." Results of the study showed that daughter's self-esteem was best predicted by mother's general support and father's physical affection. A son's self-esteem was

best predicted by a mother's companionship and a father's sustained contact. Both parents expressed more companionship to the same-sex child. Thus sex differences with regard to the family process variables influenced a child's self-esteem. Both the process variables of parental support, parental control, and parental punishment and the structure variables of intact families, divorced families, and the amount of family conflict influenced a child's self-esteem. Thus family variables and the influence of significant others were the focus of considerable research as theoretical definitions of the development and maintenance of self-esteem were explained.

CONCLUSION

Aspects of the social environment that contributed to the development of a child's self-esteem was the focal point of considerable research. Self-esteem was defined by differing theoretical explanations. For example, social learning theory emphasized modeling behavior and suggested that a child's self-esteem was positively related to the parent's self-esteem. In contrast, symbolic interaction theory emphasized reflected appraisals and suggested that a child's sense of worth was derived from perceived reflections or feedback of significant others. While both the modeling and mirroring theories were supported by the research, self-esteem was found to be more a function of the perceived reflected appraisals of significant others than of modeling parent's self-esteem. Some researchers, though, believed that the emphasis upon the reflected appraisals' major role in the development of self-esteem gave a narrow and incomplete view of self-concept formation. Consequently, self-appraisal theory emerged to broaden the symbolic interactionist view of reflected appraisals.

According to the self-appraisal theory, individuals made judgments about themselves based on observations of their own behavior. Criteria or standards for judging the observed behavior had, for the most part, been acquired from others, so a dual approach of self-appraisal and other's appraisals in the development of self-esteem was supported

by the research. Thus this dual approach to self-esteem extended the reflected appraisal approach to include the importance of appraising one's own efficacious actions as well as receiving appraisals from others in developing one's self-esteem.

The reflected appraisal approach emphasized that appraisals of others were important in the formation of the self-concept, and individuals who where more significant had a greater influence on the development of self-esteem. Both parents and peers were found to have a significant influence over a child's self-esteem according to most of the researchers, while it was also found by a few researchers that parents and peers played important--but different--functions for the child. Differences between the sexes regarding the influence of significant others on self-esteem was supported by the research, yet the findings were contradictory as to which sex was more influenced by peers and which sex was more influenced by parents. For example, some researchers found that females were more dependent on family cues for formulating their self-concepts. In contrast, other researchers found that among males perceived appraisals of parents had the largest effect on self-evaluation, while among females perceived appraisals of friends had the largest impact on self-evaluation. Thus gender appeared to play a role in determining the influence of significant others on a child's

self-esteem.

Since families played a role as significant others in the development of a child's self-esteem, the effect of family structure variables and family process variables on self-esteem was examined. The structure variable of divorced families versus intact families had conflicting results in numerous studies. Divorce was reported to have a negative effect on self-esteem in some studies, while other researchers found no association between divorce and a child's self-esteem. In contrast, the results of research were consistent in their findings pertaining to the structure variable of family conflict. In all of the studies, children who perceived greater conflict in their families had significantly lower self-concepts.

Family process variables of parental support, parental control, and parental punishment also influenced the child's self-esteem. For example, researchers found similar results regarding a positive correlation between parental support and increased self-esteem in children. Researchers did not agree, though, in their conclusions about the family process variable of parental control. While most of the researchers found significantly more positive evaluations of self were associated with controlling or restrictive parenting practices than with permissive parenting practices, one study found a marginal relationship between lower self-esteem and parental control. Research findings were

consistent with regard to the family process variable of parental punishment. Parental punishment was not found to be conducive to high self-esteem in children. Spanking, scolding, and not being allowed to engage in desirable activities was negatively correlated with the self-esteem of the child. Additionally, differences were found regarding males and females and child self-esteem. Whether fathers and mothers behave differently or the same toward male and female children was disputed in the literature. The majority of the literature indicated that the sex of the parent or child changed the interaction and subsequent influence on the self-esteem. Thus many complex variables regarding family structure, family processes, and peer and parental relationships influenced the way that children developed and maintained their self-esteem.

Because of the complex issues surrounding the development and maintenance of a child's self-esteem, there is a need for additional research in this area. A challenge is made to researchers to refine their theoretical explanations in order to fill in neglected details and to take into account overlooked complexities regarding self-esteem. Such progressive refinements would hopefully improve the theories' abilities to identify variables that may be associated with the diminishment or enhancement of the self-concepts of children. Since the formation of the self-concept does not occur in a social vacuum,

identification of such variables could provide valuable insight into how people integrate their understandings of themselves with their understandings of significant others. It would be important to consider the sexes of the children when discussing the relationships between their self-esteems and feelings toward parents and friends. The task for research in this area is to be more systematic and more rigorous in the empirical testing of components of social interaction and the conditions under which they effect dimensions of the self-esteem. If future researchers examine specific areas of behavior when studying parental and peer influences, remembering that content of the situation with regard to the influence of parents and peers is important.

Such strategies would help counselors, teachers and parents deal constructively with negative child outcomes. It is suggested that parents and educators learn more about, and become more sensitive to, the special needs and feelings of children experiencing family conflict. Educational workshops on family conflict and self-esteem, led by a school psychologist, counselor, or an outside consultant, might help parents and educators become more sensitive to the needs of the children. Counselors or psychologists need to encourage the formation of counseling groups with children for the purpose of sharing feelings, concerns, and support so that they can help then make for themselves the

most satisfying lives possible. Further longitudinal research is needed to examine conflicted families who stay together and those who separate, in order to specify what types of family conflicts are detrimental to children and just what those detrimental effects are.

If future research in this area could also rigorously attempt to identify and explain specific parental behaviors which are the antecedents of a positive self-esteem, then both children and parents could benefit from the studies. These identified antecedents, such as parental support, by no means account for all of the variability in self-esteem, yet they do reflect parental behaviors which are likely to significantly influence the development of the important construct of self-esteem. If further identified, these behaviors could be encouraged so that, more and more, children would grow up feeling that they are worthwhile individuals in control of their lives. Research that is able to go further in determining the way in which family and peers influence the self-esteem of children would be useful to society. This research would be useful in providing a better theoretical understanding of the development of the self-esteem, in providing information to practitioners and parents who work with children, and also in providing information to children in order to teach them how to enhance their own self-esteem.

He began his life with all of the classic advantages.

His mother was a supportive, loving woman who not only believed her son was a worthy human being, but also expressed that to him. His father was also a loving, supportive authority figure who set restrictive standards for the son and kindly expected him to abide by them. The boy rarely sensed conflict in his family. Instead, he sensed a happy, secure, loving circle of support from his family. His friends also seemed to like him and reflected their support and respect by looking to him for leadership. The boy felt a sense of worthiness from the positive appraisals from his friends and his family. He even felt a sense of worthiness from his own appraisals of himself and his accomplishments.

On November 22, 1963, he smiled and waved at the president as the motorcade drove past him because he identified with the president's confidence, the president's sense of worth, and the president's hope for the future. The boy felt good about himself, about his relationship with his family and friends, and about the fact that he was a worthy citizen of the United States of America.

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